/42 cont./

and vomiting and even fainting and paroxysms. It is exactly during one of these that the initiator must furtively deposit various small stones of more or less crystallized form among the vomit. These stones will henceforth be his iai or yachi (from which it is also possible that the name of the piaches may have been derived), a sort of amulet, in which are supposed to dwell hidden protective spirits, which will help them at dangerous or difficult times and in the solemn moments of tumayá or piachería.

In addition to beverages, some of them are treated by introducing through the nose and removing through the mouth strings impregnated with vegetable substances, to which they attribute magic properties or mysterious forces; they even go so far as to pass sharp grasses through (with the inevitable bleeding) for the purpose of obtaining a resonant and powerful voice. The piache must have a good voice, know the usual songs, and be able to assume different voices; this will be easier for him if he knows several languages, even though only a few words or phrases in them.

93. The piache's equipment consists of: the murei, or little bench with a figure, generally of a monkey, on which he sits to sing; the afore-mentioned yachí, or little stones; the kachiuotó, or special little bed for ingesting through the nose the juice of kumeré or tobacco leaves; the pipe, or tamuiyén, since they also make use of tobacco smoking, and finally, bundles of leaves of ayú or pirkavá instead of the maraca in general use in other tribes, which they employ to accompany the singing and to create various illusions.

94. The piache goes into a trance by ingesting through the nasal passages the above-mentioned beverages; he always works at night and in complete darkness and in a completely closed in place. Piaches make believe that their soul goes away from them and that with the magical force /43/ of the beverages, the tobacco smoke, and the noise of the leaves, it opens the doors of the hills where the maurí live, enters into

/43 cont./

787 conversation with them, discovers the cause of the illness,
755 takes away from them the spirit (energy, vigor, or health) which they had taken from the Indian, and returns it to the sick person, who should begin to improve.

756 There is no doubt that the piache is a subject of autosug-
787 gestion, an hallucinated person who believes in his own lies. In order to understand this better we must bear in mind that the ingestion of the said tisanes and others such as peyoth, meczal, yagé, miguarano, etc., produce not only inebriation, but also hallucinations and imaginative illuminations, even in distinct colors, by which some name these illusiogenic substances. And as the soul is for Indians with respect to the body, blood and vigor, and in with respect to the spiritual the interior eye or imaginative faculty, which is the most vigorous and vivid, the result is that he has the imaginative lucidity
[171] for spiritual illustration. These customs and beliefs have already been observed with regard to the Mexican Indians by López de Gómara, Pedro Mártir, and Lafitau, and other colonial writers.

755 95. It is necessary to have attended piachería seances --
787 I call them this because of their similarity to the seances of spiritualists-- in order to understand the bewitchment or hyponotization that can be produced in sick persons and even those who are not sick. Three or four times I managed to attend and I retain the memory of this grandiose and impressive aesthetic and psychological phenomenon; I still seem to hear the resonance of the various songs of the piache in the deep silence of the night and inside the round huts; I can still hear the cadence of the sheaves, which now would be rustling like a forest in a hurricane or now would sound like a grove of trees stirred by a gentle breeze; I can still hear the imitation of birds or animals, the remarkable imitation of noises that go off or come close, of spirits who went up or down, beating on the ground with force, of a multiplicity of persons who were conversing, and a thousand other things, some of which made one drowsy and others which made one's hair stand up.

/43 cont./

755 96. The piaches do not customarily work for a fixed price, but the Indians, according to their ability to pay and their gratitude and according to the good or bad results of the cure, make them gifts as they freely wish.

756 The piaches believe in the obligation to abstain from cer-
755 tain foodstuffs, principally on the day of and the night before they must perform.

755 In the cases I witnessed I did not see that the piaches were
787 /44/ real ventriloquists or that they "were talking big," as the ancients would say; they only imitated in an ordinary way different voices, with the help of the hand and quickly changing posture and place. (Darkness was a help to me in following all their tricks and illusions, both in this and when they pretended to go up in the air and down again.)

755 97. All the Indians, to a greater or lesser degree, believe themselves capable of curing by means of charms and at the
755 same time capable of producing evil effects; but naturally they
756 believe the charms and magical blowings cast by the piaches are much more efficaceous and fearsome. Among the latter as well there are degrees; and they usually consider to be the wisest of those initiated in other tribes or coming from them. For this reason the piaches sometimes say that they can do nothing to cure certain diseases, because they have been caused by other piaches who live in distant regions and possess other secrets unknown by them.

538 98. In tales and legends, more than in real life, the
756 Indians consider their piaches to be diviners and miracle workers. Thus for example, they attribute to Chirikavai or Apakavai: that he carved off human limbs and put them back on as one would put together and take apart a clock; that he turned his yachí and his pana-darí (dependents) into birds; that he was able to interpret their songs as if they were conversations of people; finally, that he ascended to the sky preceded by his nephew Marité (Scorpion) and that with his equipment and his limbs he created several constellations, among them Tamuekán,

/49 cont./

To this category belong among the Pemón Indians the practice of injuring an enemy by charming his tracks; carrying water in the mouth when planting cane and invoking the poppy so that sleep will come to children; hunters making remedies with leaves similar to the ears of some animal or other so that the animal may come out to meet them; women pouring honey into cuts on their jaws so that the chewed kachirí may turn out sweet for them; believing that eating eggs will bring out boils; believing that tripping over a stone on the path is a presage that we shall meet a traveler who is coming in the opposite direction; interpreting dreams always through similarities, e.g. moriche seeds guáimaro, red kachirí for blood, the piache's song for sickness; and a thousand more which we shall not list for the sake of brevity. About this same matter, Cecil Dampier wrote: "The savage does not pray to God to send him sun or rain: he dances a dance to the sun or he croaks like a frog..., following an association of ideas."

Y. A. Bouyssonie observed that "red ocher makes one think of blood, the condition of life, and therefore is considered to be a sort of medium for conjuring death and for facilitating posthumous existence."

The same can be said of the use of annatto or achiote among these Indians against the oradán, maurí, and amariauk.

108. The second principle gives rise to the magical practices which are called contagious and also sympathetic. To this type belong, among the Pemón Indians, the group of practices related to the couvade and the asarakpué, that is, having to do with the birth of children and the death of our relatives. The practices and abstentions with reference to the couvade, which begin from the time of the pairing of the progenitors and continue in minuendo until the children are two or three years old, affect not only the father -- as is generally said in ethnographic treatises, but also the mother, and it is based on the belief that tiredness, sickness, /50/ malevolent influences, etc., of either of the progenitors affect -- and in a higher

/51 cont./

present-day world, just as it was not possible in the past." All of this, adds Msgr. LeRoy, comes as a result of the portrait which frequently has been given us of savages, which is a portrait of pure fantasy, made by innocent or malevolent a priorists in defense of preconceived theories. "The most savage savage is a man like any other, who has his theory of life, his philosophy, his civilization, and his ways of life in conformity with the environment."

Thus, before answering the question categorically, we must remember among ourselves, spiritualism, trying to supplant not only religion but even medicine and other sciences; necromancy or the invocation of the dead; astrology; oneiromancy, or the interpretation of dreams, so frequently practiced by those who play lotteries and which still is one of the uses of playing cards; moths fluttering about candles of old or modern light bulbs, which foretell the arrival of letters; a humming in the ears, a sign that they are talking about us; and a hundred other things.

787 111. Having written this occasional composition and having undergone this /52/ examination of conscience, I say that, of the many means used for attempted divination, I only find three used by the Indians:

1) Invocation of the dead; 2) Augury, or the interpretation of natural events as presages; 3) Oneiromancy, or the interpretation of dreams (or fantasies) as omens or premonitions.

775 787 Individuals are convinced that the spirit survives and that this spirit can return among them. To this it must be added that hallucinations were (and are) very frequent among primitives and among ignorant people and among those who live in isolated areas. There in the loneliness of the countryside, far from the noise and distractions of the great concentrations of the cities, there occurs what was noted by B. Dupiney de Vorepierre, that "under the emotion of the loss of a being who was beloved by us, exalted imagination often shows so vividly the person mourned, that we believe we see him before our eyes, speak to him, and hear him."

/52 cont./

eyes, speak to him, and hear him." But the Indians, while they do have these beliefs, have great fear of disembodied spirits or orodán, and, rather than invoking them, they try to get them out of their minds; they customarily abandon the places they have lived in and destroy the tools of their dead, avoid giving the same name to their children, avoid formulas that may recall the dead person to mind, and even show displeasure when they find themselves obliged to have to say the name of the dead ones. I often noticed this reluctance when inquiring for a name in order to make notes or records and heard older persons urge the younger ones, saying to them: "Tell him, nothing will happen to you; it is the Father who is asking it of you."

So that the invocation of the dead is only practiced by the piaches, and even this only rarely: it is heard in some stories and it is said of piaches of old.

112. As for omens, not all natural events or occurrences are interpreted as presages, but only a few are traditionally admitted as such. We thus have among others:

a) A spider that hangs down from the ceiling is a warning that some traveler will arrive that day to hang his hammock in our house.

b) The cry of roosters at an unaccustomed hour is a warning that they /others/ are speaking ill of us.

c) A peculiar humming in the ears is the voice of the dead who are calling us and to this they customarily answer "ete-pai pra /53/ edai" (I don't want to go), moving the hand at the same time near the ear like one who is waving away flies.

d) An unusual commotion from the hens, paujies, or hen turkeys, that run around as if they were crazy is a sign of the imminent arrival of persons who are beloved by us.

e) The song of the bird called piká is generally a bad omen, announcing deaths, just as we are accustomed to say about the bittern; sometimes a different song of the same bird is interpreted as a good omen for hunters.

/53 cont./

787 [824] f) The plant called puuá is a good omen and they say of it that it chases hunger away from their homes.

The interpretation of dreams, as we have already said when dealing with magic, was so done by analogy, and thus the Indians say that:

a) To dream that we are looking in a mirror is a warning that we shall encounter the gleaming eyes of a tiger.

[226] [824] b) To dream that we are poisoning fish with verbasco /great mullein/ while standing in the water is a sign that we are going to catch cold.

c) To dream that we see an Indian dragging a palm tree is a warning that we shall meet a palm bear /oso palmero/ with a long tail.

d) To dream that one has a parrot or other domestic bird on one's arm is a sign to women that a son will come to them, whom they will caress.

e) To dream that we see hills in the distance is a notice that we shall meet Indians carrying great loads on their backs in their guayares.

787 789 In the interpretation of omens and fantasies there predominates the magic principle, "that which is similar is produced by that which is similar and disguises itself in that which is similar."

But in addition to this, accidental coincidences and a succession of linkings in time or space have no doubt been able to engender in the human spirit the false idea of inclusion and casuality, following the well-known paralogism: "Post hoc, ergo propter hoc." So that causality is frequently confused with casuality (grammatically and philosophically) and coincidence with joint cause.

787 I have often heard the Indians arguing among themselves about these same matters, dividing themselves among those who tenaciously believe in dreams and omens and those who doubt them and do not see in them anything other than fortuitous

/53 cont./

787 coincidences. But even these latter, being mindful of "just in case" and "precaution is not cowardice," in practice act as if they were believers. Especially concerning dreams, which sometimes are so vivid and impressive /54/ all stick to tradition and it can be said of them what someone said of simple people in general: "It doesn't matter to them what they see by day and they are so preoccupied with what passes through their heads during sleep at night."

Chapter XIV

What Is This about Couvade and Asarakpué?

116. The word and the custom. 117. False observations. 118. The four degrees of the couvade. 119. The custom is general. 120. Proposed explanations. 121. What the Pemón say about this custom of theirs. 122. The practice of asarakpué.

846 116. This exotic (French) word couvade or covada has come into our language and now all ethnologists commonly use it; other words invented to replace it, such as empollamiento /"incubation"/, simply do not fit. Foreign in its origin, this word speaks to us of a custom strange and even ridiculous when studied only superficially.

The couvade consists of the special cares which a father and a mother must take to assure good procreation (eugenics) and development of their infant children. As the Pemón say: Mure yun-pe, mure dam-pe enan dau, esenman naua ("When one is the father or mother of a child, one must be careful in the following things"). And to this is added a long and detailed list of precautions.

/96 cont./

774 Correlative to this belief there exists among these Indians animism, which, like all the other -isms, more than a theory or elaborate doctrine, is a mental tendency which consists, as Grandmaison says, "of imagining everywhere, behind perceptible objects, life, activity -- by extension, will, powers, passions -- more or less traced from the human type, anthropomorphic." Thus also Mons. Valbuena says of animism, that it must be considered "not as a religious factor, at least in principle, but as an intellectual conception, as a general mentality."

776 b) These piá or -imá (call them genii, godlets, or numbers) are neither offended nor pleased by moral or immoral actions, but by physical actions -- sometimes substances -- which are damaging or pleasing to them or to their descendants.

753 To the native mentality true good things are this life and that which is related to it, health especially, food, etc.; and the bad things also true are illnesses /two plates appear here/ /97/ and pains and, especially, death, the most terrible and most feared evil, not so much because it is the unknown which opens into the beyond, but principally because of the loss of the good things and family so loved here.

775 To the Pemón there is no doubt but that the soul survives,
● 787 although this conviction is not deduced by them from logistic arguments, but from intimate personal experience and from very vivid imaginative impressions while asleep and in other states of exaltation.

756 c) Finally, we have in place of acts of worship various
788 observances, based on a belief in the afore-mentioned numbers
778 or potorí; in place of priests, the piaches; in place of prayer, the charms which we have already defined in another place, and, in lieu of the supernatural, the magical.

789 We would say once more that magic, although dealing with spiritual influences, is not religion; it does not deal with morality, but with physical acts, corporally maleficent or beneficent, psychic only insofar as the soul is united with the

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THE KAMAINO (OMENS) OF THE PEMON INDIANS

The following article is by the Capuchin missionary Fray Cesáreo de Armellada who forms part of the Mission to which the Venezuelan government has entrusted the care of various Indian groups of the states of Zulia and Bolívar. The author has dedicated himself to the compilation and study of the "oral literature" of the *Pemon* Indians since 1931.- Various of his works have been published previously in this *Boletín*.

In studying the mentality of these *Pemón* Indians, we come up against this word *Kamainó* which literally means "he who or that which means", and which in use is equivalent to our "oracle" and "omen". For them, our futures are present times which keep approaching until they are before our eyes; but sharp-sighted eyes or an oracle can go forward to meet them like a bird, who soaring at a certain altitude sees coming what we yet cannot see.

The spirit liberated from the body during a dream (according to their belief) and the *piache* when he is in a trance and also free from the bodily enclosure through the use of vegetable drugs, are the great *kamainó* or oracles. And dreams should be considered as the commonest omens or predictions. Dreams are always interpreted on the basis of similarity, which is the great principle and the great error of these Indians: to think that the similar has an effect upon the similar (e. g., a leaf shaped like a deer's ear, into the deer); that the name and the image are the thing named or represented not only in language or in art, but also in the field of chance; that sickness of one member of the family will necessarilly and physiologically have a repercussion on all of the relatives, etc.

Here we limit our study to certain natural occurrences which many times we have heard the *Pemón* Indians interpret as omens or warnings of things that are going to happen. I have always asked, how can a spider know this, how can a chicken know more than we do. And the answer were always the same: "truly it is strange, but so it is".

The principal *kamainó*, heard interpreted as omens by the Indians during the years of our stay among them, are:

[R72 contains no English TEXT--Analyst]

If a *modoi* (species of a very tiny spider) hangs within the buse (spins his web) it means that a traveler will come to hang up his web or hammock. 787 82

If a flea bites an Indian it is a sign that Indians are coming to his house.

If a boy falls from a hammock, it is a sign that he is going to be crazy.

If a bat hovers above the smoke of our home, it is a sign that our hunters will find a deer.

If on the road we stumble, it means that we are going to meet travelers coming in the opposite direction.

If a *viomâ* (kind of bird) whistles *kui-pí, kui-pí*, he is saying: "a deer is hidden over there."

If a rooster or a hen crows at night at unusual hours, it means that one of our acquaintances is speaking against us.

If our ears ring, it means that we are going (warning of death). In this case the Indians strike their ears as one who shoos away flies and say: *etë pai pra edai* (I don't wan to go).

When the clouds are tinged with red, it's a sign that spotted tigers are being born.

When an Indian is weaving something and his legs go to sleep, he says: "it's a sign that they are going to buy it."

When the eyelids twich (with those involuntary wormlike movements), it is a sign that some one of our relatives is dying. [763]

When a stick crackles as it burns, it is a sign that some one of our relatives is suffering.

The above is sufficient for our readers to form an idea how the *Pemón* Indians think in relation to omens.

756 unknown to any of my informants and the piaches themselves are quite unapproachable on the subject.[173]

756 776 [287] Piaimá, a supernatural being or spirit, is said to have initiated the first piaches into their mysteries by exactly the same procedure that I have described for the earthly piache's initiation of an apprentice. He is also said now to be corporeally visible to a piache (but to no one else) and to converse with and advise the piaches. Although I lack specific information on the point, it therefore seems highly probable that the initiation involves the invocation of Piaimá and that some, at least, of the various curative procedures also involve his presence and co-operation. However this may be, it is definite that the piaches are in rapport with Piaimá and that he is for them co-operative in some degree but that for other Indians and without the intervention of a piache he is exceedingly dangerous and may appear in the guise of a savage killer. He is thus essentially evil, a devil in fact, and the piaches derive much of their power through personal acquaintance with this devil and through their ability to temper his wrath or to direct his activities into desirable channels.

The Theory of Disease.

753 Although I shall not go into detail on this subject, the Kamarakoto theory of disease is so inextricably linked with magic and religion that it must be briefly summarized. It is not now true of the Kamarakotos, as has been stated for various Indian tribes, and probably was never true that they considered quite all ailments to be supernatural in origin. The manifest relationship between insect and snake bites and their immediate effects (but of course excluding malaria and other secondary effects) is naturally recognized. All swellings and ulcers are ascribed to such causes, even when this is not correct. It is not clear to me whether an ulcer, for instance, is supposed to be due to an actual bite, unnoticed at the time, or to the bite of a supernatural insect or snake. Although there is no clear recognition of their cause, colds, constipation, indigestion, and the like (but not the fever that may arise from these) are also now considered usually to have natural causes, although in this case one cannot be [255] sure that such an opinion is not relatively recent. For these ailments believed to be natural in origin spiritual remedies may nevertheless be applied, such as [257] remedial dancing for ulcers. Physical remedies, including various herbs and infusions, are, however, in common use for them and this purely medical subject is outside the scope of my report.

[254] Diseases for which there is no obvious physical cause, particularly fevers of any sort, are considered to be wholly supernatural in origin. These are usually caused by kanaimaton (plural; singular — kanaima).

173 [see footnote on p. 328, category 116 — Analyst]

Typical hunting magic with a
224 maraka and a song-spell appears in the Legend of Maichak on another page
773 (the episode of the second magic implement, stolen by Maichak from an armadillo). It is reasonable to assume that this represents magic once really used by mortals, but it is merely inherited by the Kamarakotos as part of the story and is not used by them. They do employ two very curious but typically Carib
824 magic means of increasing proficiency in hunting. One of these is to insert a cord of twisted moriche fibers into one nostril and to pull it out through the
304 mouth. The other is to scarify the skin of the arms and then to rub in a crushed
824 plant, called kumi, which is sometimes especially grown for this purpose. Our hunters ruefully admitted that none of the Kamarakoto hunting magic is really very effective.

General Religious Ideas.

773 Most of the myths, including the several that together make up the story of Maichak as given in this report, abound in unnatural and supernatural events and beings. To this extent, as well as to the extent that they embody explanations of natural phenomena and of creation, they include ideas usually related to religion. It would, however, be misleading to suppose that they form or assume the existence of any coherent or fixed body of religious doctrine. They are simply stories, fairy tales if one wishes, in which the non-natural is taken for granted.

778 There is firm belief in the existence of spirits, mostly inimical, of whom Piaima is typical and is the most important. Piaima and the kanaimaton are still very much in the Indians' minds. Various other spirits are believed to exist but are seldom thought of and few of the Indians can even name any of them.
778 Such simple theology as the tribe may have possessed seems largely to have
178 broken down and to have been forgotten except as it has a practical bearing on
782 their lives, which means except as it relates to illness and misfortune. Prayer,
787 or any form of communication with the supernatural, seems to be unknown except as already suggested for the piaches.

In this rudimentary and probably degenerate system, misfortune is adequately explained by kanaima. Evil and sin do not appear to be considered supernatural or unnatural and there is no evident moral or ethical relationship of religion to their lives, which undoubtedly goes far to explain (or at least is correlated with) their carefree, happy, and, in a sense, sinless lives. They do not have any burden of original sin to bear. Felicity is considered a normal state for which no thanks are due to powers on high. I could not learn that they have any planting or harvest gods or ceremonies, which seems curious in an agricultural people.

775 No clear-cut statement of indigenous doctrine regarding the soul and life after death could be obtained, the usual statement being that "we don't know